Mahakali Treaty

394. SHRI CHITTA BASU : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Mahakali Treaty has since been ratified by Nepal's Parliament;

(b) if so, whether it has opened up new opportunities for further strengthening of relations between the two countries, especially in water resources cooperation;

(c) whether the Prime Minister held any talks with the Prime Minister of Nepal during his recent visit to Rome; and

(d) if so, the issues that were discussed and the outcome thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) During the discussions, a wide range of subjects were covered, and the friendly, cordial nature of bilateral relations between India and Nepal was reiterated. The discussions emphasised the need for intensifying bilateral economic cooperation and the need for diversifying trade relations. Reference was also made to the successful conclusion, and subsequent ratification, of the Mahakali Treaty which has opened up many new opportunities for cooperation. A specific emphasis was also laid on the need for exploiting the immense economic potential of the South Asian region for the benefit of the people of the region. The Prime Minister of Nepal, during the meeting, extended an invitation to the Indian Prime Minister to visit Nepal, which was gladly accepted.

[Translation]

Subsidy for Lift Irrigation

395. SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have made any changes in the scheme pertaining to the subsidy given to farmers for lift irrigation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the total area to be covered under lift irrigation; and

(d) the State-wise break-up of the funds allocated for the year 1996-97 for lift irrigation ?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) Union Government is not operating any scheme under which subsidy for lift irrigation is given to farmers.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

[English]

New Policies on Highways and Shipping

396. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have announced the new policy on highways and shipping recently;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof;

(c) whether the Government have also taken any important policy decision in regard to major and minor ports;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor and the time by which new policies on highways and shipping are likely to be announced?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a), (b) and (e) Government has announced new policy on National Highways (NH), the salient features of which are as under :—

(i) Simplification of land acquisition and environmental clearance procedure.

(ii) Collection of toll in perpetuity on improved four lane sections of National Highways to be used for further development of National Highways.

(iii) Guidelines finalised for taking up NH projects on Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis providing inter-alia for award of work through competitive bidding on least cost to user.

(iv) The Government enabled to make capital Investment in National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for leveraging the same to raise further resources from market.

However, new policy on Shipping is under consideration.

(c) and (d) Government have issued policy guidelines on private sector participation in the Port Sector. The salient features of the same are given in the statement enclosed. As far as minor ports are concerned, the responsibility for the development of same rests with the respective Maritime State Government.

Statement

(i) The existing legislative framework permits private sector participation in ports.

(ii) Ports will continue to discharge their regulatory role under Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

(iii) In identified projects to be put out on tender on BOT basis, the feasibility report will be made at the expense of the port, the cost of which will be subsequently recovered from the successful tenderer.

(iv) BOT model will be generally used for private sector participation with the assets reverting free to the port after concession period. Evaluation will be made on the basis of criteria laid down clearly in the tender document and will be on the basis of maximum realisation to the port using NPV analysis.

(v) The concession period would be decided upon by the respective Port Trusts in each case with the maximum period not exceeding thirty years.

(vi) The Port will give no guarantee either for financial return or for the traffic which can be expected.

(vii) The Tariff Authority may fix a ceiling tariff and leave the private entrepreneur free to charge upto to the ceiling at the rates to be notified by the entrepreneur. If the Tariff Authority is satisfied, a suitable periodic increase in tariff may be permitted on justified grounds.

(viii) Private Sector Participation will be on the basis of open competitive bidding based on two cover system.

(ix) The criteria for evaluation in taking on lease equipments/ports crafts by Port Trust, and for pilotage will be the least cost to the ports.

(x) There will be no adverse effect on port labour. No retrenchment will be done without the concurrence of labour and only in accordance with Industrial Disputes Act and relevant labour laws. Lessee will be bound by all the labour laws of the country.

[Translation]

Schemes for Population Control

397. SHRI JAYSINH CHAUHAN : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated or propose to formulate any new special scheme for the population control;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government also propose to make available high and better quality contraceptive pills tor the population control;

(e) if so, the details thereof,

(f) whether the World Health Organisation has given any advice or assistance in this regard; and

(g) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) to (c) A new scheme viz. Community Award Scheme has been introduced in 1996 under which one revenue village with a population of more than 500 which registers the lowest crude birth rate, lowest infant mortality rate, lowest child mortality rate, and lowest maternal mortality rate in each district during the year, will be given an award of Rs. 2 lakhs.

(d) and (e) The contraceptive pills distributed under National Family Welfare Programme conform to the quality standards prescribed under Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.

(f) and (g) World Health Organisation has given raw material for tabletting oral contraceptive pills in 1993, as commodity assistance.

12.01 hrs.

STATEMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER

(i) Successful Testing and Launching of Prithvi Missile

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA) : Sir, with your kind permission, I would like to make a statement in connection with the successful launching of the Prithvi Missile.

Sir, I rise before the House to convey my own congratulations and the good wishes of the entire country to the scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation who have successfully tested the 250-km. range version of the Prithvi Missile yesterday. As is known, this version is for the use of the Indian Air Force and will significantly add to our defensive capability. As the House is aware, we have placed special emphasis on self-reliance in this field and the success of yesterday's launch is one more milestone in our programme. The DRDO and its team of dedicated scientists have done the nation proud and I am sure the House will join me in placing on record our deep appreciation for the excellent work done by them.

(ii) Targetted Public Distribution System

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA) : Sir, a well targetted and properly functioning Public Distribution System is an important constituent of the strategy for poverty eradication. However, the Public Distribution System as it now stands has been widely criticised for its failure to serve the population below the poverty line, its urban bias, and lack of transparent and accountable arrangements for delivery. Realising this, the Government proposes to streamline the Public Distribution System targeting it on the poor by issuing special cards to families Below the Poverty Line (BPL) and selling essential articles under the PDS to them at specially subsidised prices, with better monitoring of the delivery system.